

CATERING

PURPOSE: Provide information on how to attract new and repeat catering business.

SCOPE: This guide applies to club managers, catering managers, kitchen managers and all banquet and catering personnel that are involved in the catering operation.

GENERAL: There are many benefits to the club and Services as a whole, when the catering program expands and improves. The revenue generated by a catering program can make the difference between a club that is vibrant and meeting the needs of the community, or a club which is struggling. Catering provides an opportunity for creativity. It is one of the most exciting and profitable activities of the club's operation.

GUIDANCE:

Expanding Market

Catering, both on and off premise, is one of the fastest growing segments in the food service industry today. Hotels, conference sites, special events facilities are experiencing unprecedented growth, as both business and personal special events functions are being conducted away from the home and office.

CATERING IN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

Strengths/Advantages

- ▢ It is difficult to lose money on a catered event. You know how many people you will serve, what they will eat, how long they will stay, you know your costs, and you establish a pre-determined price.
- ▢ There is usually a variety of function space in the club and other locations on base.
- ▢ Most clubs have large restaurant kitchens and can offer expansive and creative banquet menus.
- ▢ Catering permits the club to fully utilize the staff. This is an excellent way to effectively use your full-time and/or part-time staff.

☞ The community has a number of private associations, professional organizations, retirees, and alumni groups authorized to use the club.

☞ The number of business meetings and business social events held by organizations that do business with the installation can be accommodated in the club.

☞ Individually sponsored parties such as weddings, promotions, retirements and family reunions held by members and authorized customers offers a rich source of revenue.

☞ Unused food items, prepared for the catered event, can often be served as part of the subsequent lunch or dinner meals.

☞ Additional income can be generated from the rental of cookware, serving dishes, tables and other catering-related equipment.

☞ Catering provides the opportunity to generate additional income from such ancillary sources as:

- Photographers
- Entertainers
- Bakeries
- Florists
- Rental firms with specialty items, i.e. design lines, props, equipment, etc.

Weakness

These are some of the weaknesses of our clubs catering program:

☞ In many situations, club menus are dull, uninteresting and unimaginative. Members are often offered a better “deal” at off-base facilities.

☞ There is a noticeable lack of creativity and flexibility in planning events.

☞ There is an absence of a “sure we can do that” attitude.

☞ There is no incentive for the catering staff to seek additional business.

☞ Some clubs do not seek feedback from their employees. Employees are listening posts and monitor the performance of each event.

☞ Many club managers have limited financial resources for the enhancement of their catering program.

Managers and chefs should visit and analyze their competition. This is an authorized expense. Competitor shopping does not cost..... it pays!

With knowledge of your competition, you will have the information necessary to develop a strategy for overcoming any competitive disadvantages.

How to Capitalize on Catering as a Revenue Generator

Consider this:

- ☞ Establish and maintain high service standards. Inform the community of the club's commitment to ***“Do it Right.”***
- ☞ Create awareness of your catering programs by embarking on strong marketing program:
 - Flyers
 - Table tents
 - Direct mailing
 - Cross-promotion with other Services activities on base.
 - Direct tele-marketing
- ☞ Assure the catering office personnel spend time out of the office contacting groups and individuals to increase awareness of the club's catering capability. Persons/groups to contact include:
 - Authorized groups (private associations such as wives clubs, Association of Retired Military Personnel, Boy Scouts, etc.)
 - Organizational units assigned to the base
 - Newly arrived personnel attending orientation briefings

Benefits of a Successful Club Catering Program

Catering is the vehicle to promote many activities and services offered by your club:

- ☞ The quality, preparation and presentation of food
- ☞ The skill and professionalism of the club staff
- ☞ High quality of your well bar stock
- ☞ Club ambiance, decor, and comfort of the meeting/party rooms
- ☞ Opportunity to provide catering services off premise, i.e.:
 - Private office parties
 - Satellite location (picnic, private homes, etc.)
- ☞ A strong catering program provides the opportunity to introduce new and innovative food items to the community.
- ☞ Catering is the catalyst for social interaction within the community. A positive social experience leads to repeat bookings.

☞ Catering is a way to reward your best personnel. (The distribution of service charge income is seen as added benefit to the serving staff).

☞ Theme events are happy times and generate positive word of mouth advertisement. This will lead to more business.

SUMMARY: Catering can afford you the opportunity of being creative; take that opportunity and make the best of it. Have fun in the process, and learn as you go. More information is provided in the Air Force Club Catering Guide.